INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN JAPANESE AND VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES IN INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES IN JAPAN
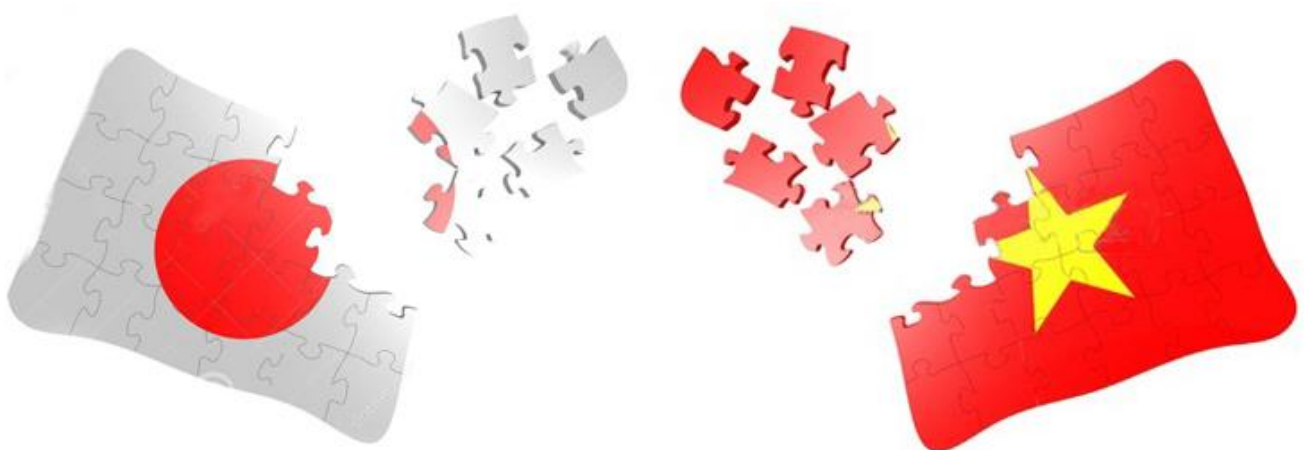
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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In the 21st century, with the spread of globalization across the world, the physical borders among countries especially in business are diminishing and people with diverse ethnical and cultural backgrounds gather to work together to reach international goals for their companies. There is an increase in the permeability of cultural norms and assumptions (Earley & Ang, 2003) and problems in intercultural communication cannot be avoided, which can affect the outcome of the project of the multicultural team. As a result, the ability to communicate effectively with people from various cultures is emphasized in international organizations (Conaway, Easton, Schmidt & Wardrope, 2007; Dodd, 1998).

In this research project, I would like to focus on the intercultural relation in the workplace between Vietnam and Japan. In September 1973, Japanese government took the initiative to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam and started the foundation of the two countries' relation in Modern time. Although over the period 1978-1991 due to Vietnam's international isolation and armed issue with Cambodia, the assistance from Japan was frozen but it is re-vitalized on 1992 after Vietnam shifting to reforms called "Doi Moi" in 1986 and the conclusion of peace with Cambodia in 1991 (Guy & Laurent, 2008). Since then, Japan has been Vietnam's greatest supporter in term of economic growth and social forms. Nowadays, many Japanese motorbikes and cars are seen on Vietnamese street and Japanese goods can be seen in most stores in the tropical country while Japanese people can eat at Vietnamese restaurant and buy Vietnamese products easily in their country.

Along with the expansion in the relation between the two countries, number of Vietnamese people migrate to Japan to study, work and live has increased significantly. In 1964, the number of Vietnamese people in Japan is only about less than 100 people, but till 2008, this number multiples many times up to 41,136 people.
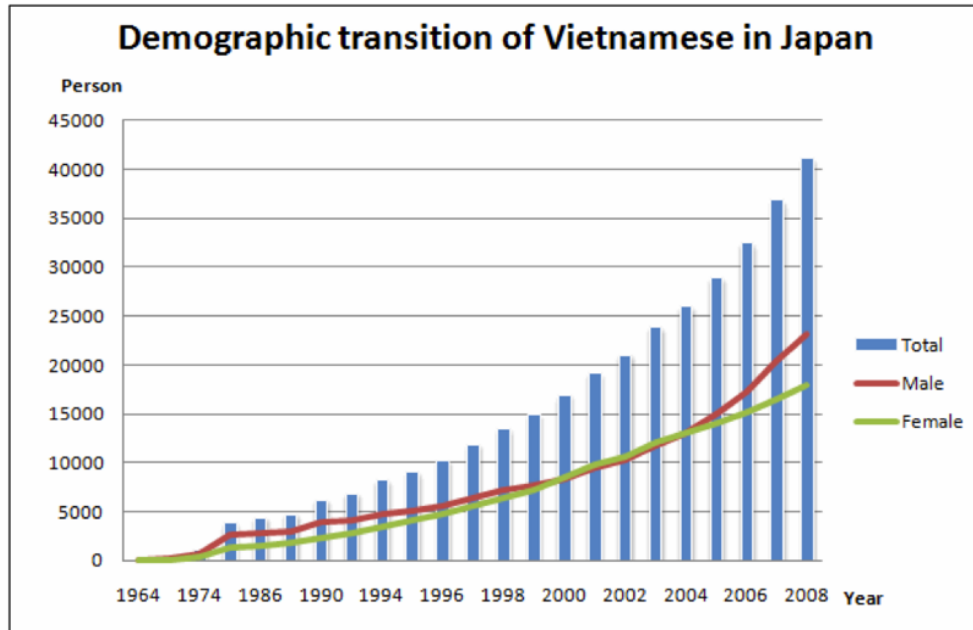
Demographic Transition of Vietnamese in Japan
(Ministry of Justice, Statistics on foreigners registered in Japan, 2008)

Vietnam and Japan are very close geographically but the two countries have long ran on different historical paths so there are still many differences in culture, customs and ways of thinking arising when people from 2 countries come to work together, which has forced us to pay more attention to the intercultural issues. This study will be useful for not only Vietnamese and Japanese employees but also hope to assist people working in workplace of different cultures to learn and adapt to increase their working efficiencies (Charney & Martin, 2000).

There have been many studies about intercultural communication in Japan with people from Western countries group (Wilkinson, E., 1990; Tsunoda, 1978; Nagatani & Edgington, 1998) consisting of mostly United States (Gudykunst, 2003; Sugimoto, 1998) and some Eastern countries such as China (Nishijima & Tao, 2009) and Korea (Nam, Nisijima & Saiki, 2006).

However, there is no research about intercultural communication between Japanese and Vietnamese conducted. Thus, this study will explore the differences in how Japanese and Vietnamese perceive factors contributing to the success of intercultural communication, face intercultural communication barriers and adapt to people from the other cultures.

MOTIVATION

I have heard many stories about intercultural conflicts between Japanese and Vietnamese employees and mostly because of misunderstanding of cultural characteristics. Therefore, I want to conduct this research to find out the common issues regarding intercultural communication between Japanese and Vietnamese employees.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How differently Japanese and Vietnamese employees perceive factors contributing to the success of intercultural communication?

How differently Japanese and Vietnamese employees face problems of intercultural communication?

How differently Japanese and Vietnamese employees adapt to people from the other cultures?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is hoped that both Japanese and Vietnamese working in multicultural companies in Japan can be aided with more understanding about intercultural communications between two cultures, what are the obstacles and how to deal with them in able to improve communication activities within the company. This study is also expected to generate further studies and discussion on intercultural communication between two countries and other countries that haven't been put on the topic.

RESEARCH DESIGN

I would like to apply comparative design for this research. Comparative research is the term widely employed to describe studies of societies, countries, cultures, systems, institutions, social structures and change over time and space. Not all international research is comparative and not all comparative research is international or cross-national. Comparison should be between countries or cross-national thereby largely discounting intra-country comparisons and the temporal dimensions as defining properties (Mackie and Marsh, 1995)
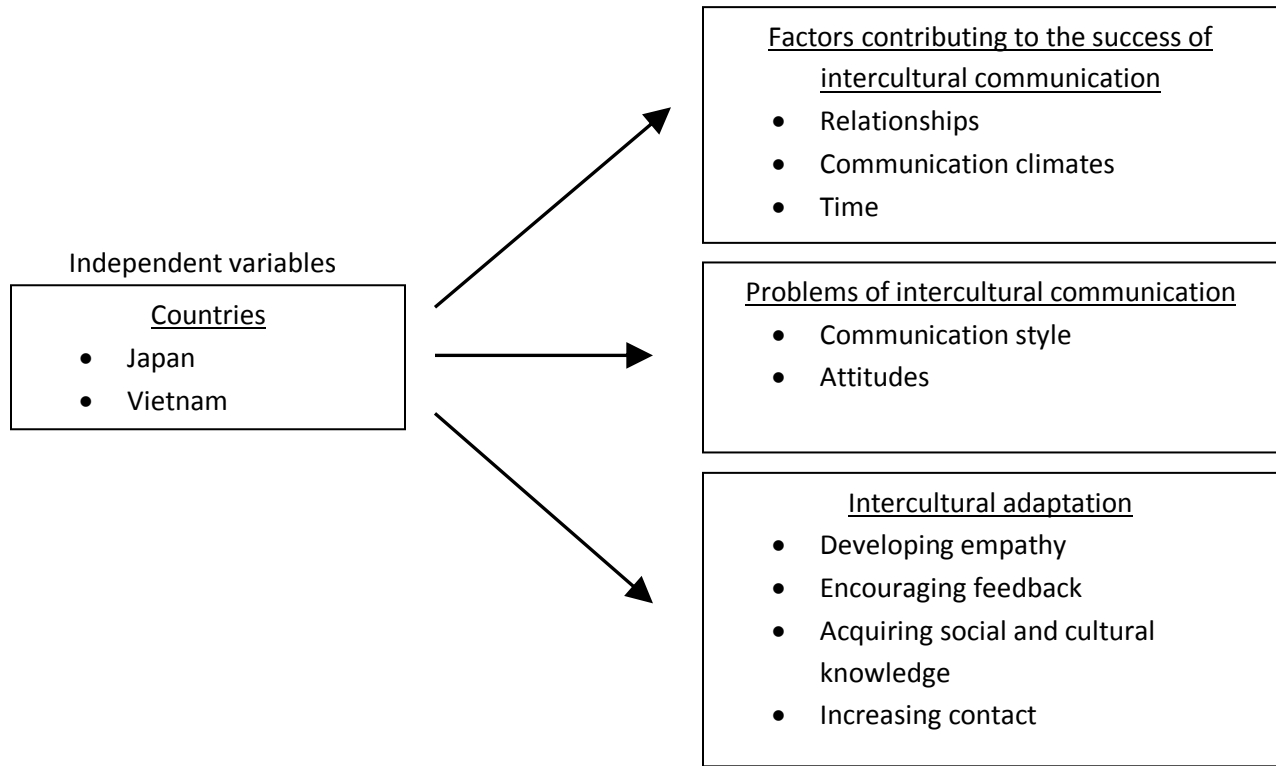
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
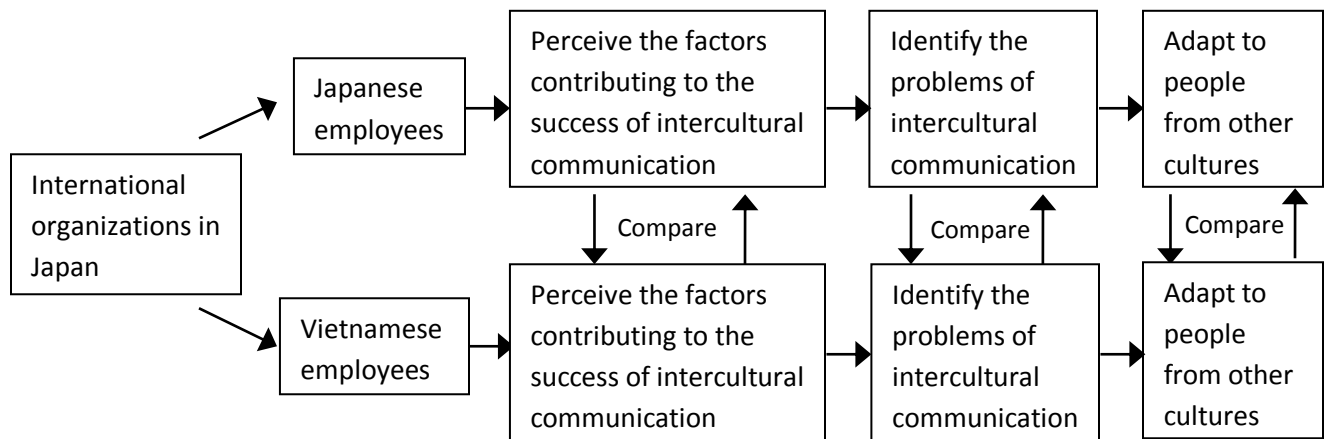
INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES

In the below table we are showing the independent variables of Japanese and Vietnamese employees working in international companies in Japan. The three dependent variables will be

Dependent variables

discussed about factors contributing to the success of intercultural communication, problems of intercultural communication and intercultural adaptation.

Independent variables

Countries
- Japan
- Vietnam

Factors contributing to the success of intercultural communication
- Relationships
- Communication climates
- Time

Problems of intercultural communication
- Communication style
- Attitudes

Intercultural adaptation
- Developing empathy
- Encouraging feedback
- Acquiring social and cultural knowledge
- Increasing contact

Next table is showing the Cultural Adaptation Framework that would be the foundation to arrange the literature review for this research.

International organizations in Japan

Japanese employees → Perceive the factors contributing to the success of intercultural communication → Identify the problems of intercultural communication → Adapt to people from other cultures

Compare

Vietnamese employees → Perceive the factors contributing to the success of intercultural communication → Identify the problems of intercultural communication → Adapt to people from other cultures
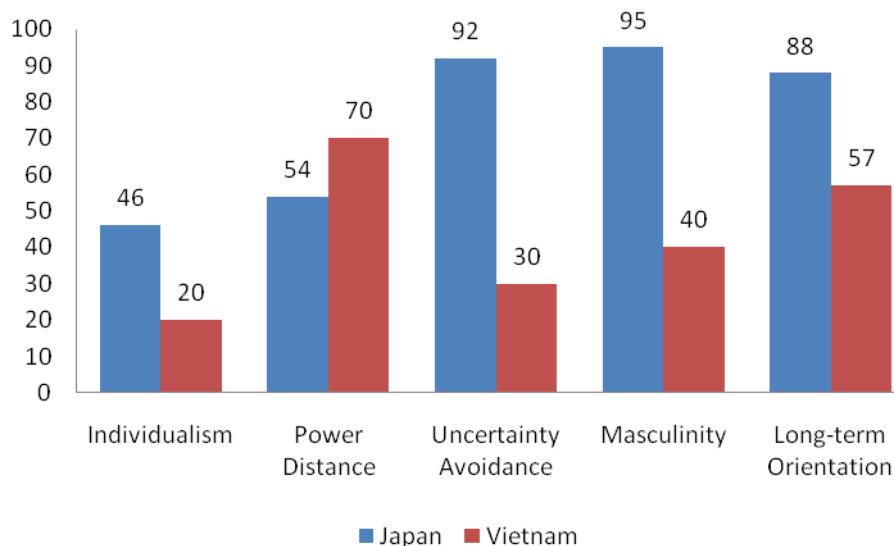
Compare

Compare

SUPPORTING THEORIES

In the explanation for the conceptual framework of intercultural communication of Japanese and Vietnamese employees, there are two supporting theories for each dependent variable: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and Hall's Contextual Theory.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory is a study developed by Ducth social psychologist Geert Hofstede using data from IBM – a large multinational business corporation consisting of 117,000 survey questionnaires from 88,000 employees in 66 countries in the 1970s (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). His theory presented four work-related cultural dimensions individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. Hofstede and Bond (1988) added the fifth dimension – long term and short term orientation with roots from the Eastern cultures. Hofstede's theory has been well-known as one of the most influential studies for people interested on intercultural business communication field (Fang, 2003). Over 30 years after the conduction, it has been widely used in most of studies regarding intercultural management and international business systems (Michael & College, 1997; Schlunze, Hyttel-Srensen, & Ji, 2011).

According to Hofstede Website (2010), cultural dimensions comparison between Japan and Vietnam is shown in the following chart:

Japan and Vietnam's cultural dimensions comparison (Hofstede, 2010)

Next, each dimension of the theory and the differences between Japan and Vietnam is going to be explained.

The first dimension is individualism/collectivism is whether people can be independent or interdependent in groups. In individualistic countries such as North American, Europe and Australia (Maude, 2011), employees in the company like to work independently and be self-reliant and result-orientated. While in collectivistic countries like Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle East, tight social network is emphasized, people tend to care for members of their group and work in harmony. Family cohesiveness and workplace loyalty is very strong

(Dwairy, 1998). As we can see from the chart, both Japan and Vietnam have less than 50 in individualism but Japan doubles Vietnam, which means Vietnamese employees prefer to work in groups to Japanese employees. This can be easily explained since Japan is more developed than Vietnam and developed countries tend to increase their individualism score along with their economic growth (Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2010).

Secondly, power-distance is the degree of separation between people of different levels in society and the workplace. In high power-distance countries such as India, Russia or France, the company is organized in a vertical hierarchy and information flow is restricted (Gudykunst et al., 1996). High power-distance easily lead to the decline of openness, closure and informality and conflict between superiors and subordinates is avoided (Bazerman et al., 2000). In the low power-distance countries such as Denmark, Israel and the Scandinavian countries, the company is held in flat hierarchy, there is equality between superiors and subordinates and informality is encouraged (Maude, 2011). Vietnam has a higher power-distance score than Japan so Vietnamese employees emphasizes on the importance of power than Japanese employees.

The third dimension uncertainty avoidance discusses whether a culture accepts uncertainty and how it handles ambiguity (Guirdham, 2011). In countries with high uncertainty avoidance such as Greece, Portugal and Japan, people are afraid of failure and risks and refuse to change. They rely on rules and punish nonconformity, which makes them more stressful in the workplace. However, in countries with low uncertainty avoidance such as Germany, Hong Kong and Ireland, people succeed easily because they prefer flexibility and accept innovative ideas and risk-taking (Maude, 2011). The chart says that Japan has a very high score of uncertainty avoidance while Vietnam has a low one. Therefore, it can be said that Japanese employees tend to avoid uncertainty in much more situations than Vietnamese employees.

Fourthly, the dimension masculinity/femininity shows how each culture's view of life issues (Guirdham, 2011). In masculine countries such as Italy, material values, achievement and status in society and the workplace are the desire of most people and the difference in men and women's role is very large. Meanwhile, in the feminine countries such as Northern Europe, people are concerned about the quality of life and sexual equality (Hofstede, 1980). Same with uncertainty avoidance, score of masculinity of Japan triples Vietnam. Thus, Japanese employees focus more on material and achievement while Vietnamese employees are concerned more about life.

Lastly, the dimension long-term or short-term time orientation is about the satisfaction level of cultural groups on the results achieved. The long-term orientated countries mostly in Asia such as China, Hong Kong or Taiwan have the patience to achieve the final result and it takes time to build relationship. And short-term orientated countries such as Spain and Portugal, people require quick returns or rewards (Hofstede, 2001) and business and relationships are two separate things. It is presented in the chart that Japan is a very long-term orientated country while Vietnam is in the middle of long and short term. As a result, Japanese employees concentrate on a longer road than Vietnamese employees.

However, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory also suffer much criticism from scholars around the world. Firstly, the study was conducted in 1970s which is nearly 40 years, the world has witnessed a rapid change in economy and society due to globalization. Therefore, this theory is assumed to be outdated and fail to account for the convergence of cultural values in modern times (Jones, 2007). This might be the case since both Japan (Donnelly & King, 2010) and Vietnam (Engholm, 1995) are experiencing rapid economic change which stimulates changes in society and culture. Secondly, the data of the study was collected in questionnaires so it did not explore deeper issues of cultures. Thirdly, since the theory results from a one company approach, it oversimplifies the complex structures of various cultures and is not able to provide full information presenting for a whole culture (Graves, 1986; Olie, 1995).

Criticism on Hofstede's theory

Hofstede's work has been immensely influential and can be considered foundation to much of contemporary intercultural communication research, particularly in business and management studies, but it has even made its mark in the sociolinguistics of intercultural communication (Clyne, 1994). At the same time, Hofstede has also been widely criticized on a number of fronts (McSweeney, 2002). Most of this criticism focuses on the details of his data collection and analysis while approving of the overall thrust of his work.

Although it is always rather dangerous to classify phenomena into statistical boxes, most of the categories identified by Hofstede seem intuitively reasonable. Most of us would be able to recognize our own national contexts, whilst also realizing the danger of using simple stereotypes without due care and without being sensitive to changing attitudes and circumstances.

Cultural Homogeneity

This criticism is perhaps the most popular. Hofstede's study assumes the domestic population is an homogenous whole. However most nations are groups of ethnic units (Nasif et al. 1991, 82; Redpath 1997, 336). Analysis is therefore constrained by the character of the individual being assessed; the outcomes have a possibility of arbitrariness. On the other hand Hofstede tends to ignore the importance of community, and the variations of the community influences (Dorfman and Howell, 1988, Lindell and Arvonen, 1996).

Out-dated

Some researchers have claimed that the study is too old to be of any modern value, particularly with today's rapidly changing global environments, internationalisation and convergence. Hofstede countered saying that the cross-cultural outcomes were based on centuries of indoctrination, recent replications have supported the fact that culture will not change overnight (Hofstede 1998).

Hall's context theory

Hall's theory in term of high context and low context is one of the most important theories in cross-cultural study, based on how people prefer to convey their messages (Richardson and

Smith, 2007). High context cultures such as China and Ireland have a strong connection with collectivism in which people are deeply involved with each other, intimate relationships are focused so people hide their feelings and usually imply in their nonverbal language (Hall, 1976). Meanwhile, in low context countries including United Sates and Germany people are more individualized, have a little involvement with other and communication is more direct in a verbal way (Gudykunst, 1993). As Hall (1976) examines, both Japan and Vietnam expose very high context cultural dimension, which means employees from both countries prefer indirect communication. Nonetheless, the high context – low context theory has been criticized for going the opposite result that it expected – it brings more stereotypes in the intercultural relationship can causes people to "define the person before understanding the person" (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2010).

Criticism on Hall's theory

It could be said that the theory is guilty of stereotyping and generalizing. Also, the theory does not identify people as individuals. According to the theory, one person is equal to one culture. However, people are different in a culture with dissimilar background and personalities.

Subsidiary theories

Face-negotiation theory

Face-Negotiation Theory is primarily based on the research of Stella Ting-Toomey, a professor of Human Communication Studies at California State University, Fullerton.

Cultural norms and values influence and shape how members of cultures manage face and how they manage conflict situations. Originally a theory focusing on conflict (Ting-Toomey, 1985), FNT has been expanded to integrate cultural-level dimensions and individual-level attributes to explain face concerns, conflict styles, and facework behaviors (e.g., Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; see also Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, Chapter 8 in this volume).

Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory

Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory focuses on effective interpersonal and intergroup communication (Gudykunst, 1995) and incorporates cross-cultural variability in anxiety/uncertainty management processes. The basic contention of the theory is that effective communication emerges from mindfully managing uncertainty and anxiety. Other factors such as social identities and attitudes that vary across cultures influence the amount of uncertainty and anxiety that individuals experience. Their focus here is on the cross-cultural variability portion of the of the theory.

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory is concerned with understanding interactions between people of different groups by assessing the language, nonverbal behavior and paralanguage individuals use (Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile & Ota, 1995). Individuals signal their attitudes such as like or dislike toward each other through different strategies such as convergence or moving

toward speakers, divergence or moving away from speakers, and maintenance or not attempting to move toward or away from speakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Right from the beginning of human beings, people have formed the habit of living in groups and gradually create rules and norms for each group, which is the birth of various cultures. In the last century, thanks to globalization, the amount of contact among cultural groups has increased significantly and the gap between people from different cultures has become smaller (Steger, 2009). Along with the rapid rise of intercultural communication, the diversity in national and ethnic backgrounds of people workplaces all over the world has emerged (Guirdham, 2011). Every country has its own cultural characteristics so come differences in communication may be an obstacle for the whole team to reach their goal. This paper will explore the issue of intercultural between Japanese and Vietnamese employees in terms of factors contributing to the success of intercultural communication, intercultural communication barriers and how to adapt to people from the other cultures.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

First of all, the definition of culture and communication should be analyzed as a starting point to focus deeper into the issue of intercultural communication because to learn intercultural communication is to understand the relationship between culture and communication. According to Maude (2011), culture can be like a kaleidoscope in which different people have different images about it. Fifty years ago, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) reported that there are about 64 definitions of culture by many researchers. Hofstede (1994) defined culture as "a collective programming of the mind" that differentiates members of a culture to others. Meanwhile, Harris and Moran (1996) believes that culture is "a set of knowledge, beliefs, values, religion, customs" absorbed by members of the cultural group and inherit to the next generations. People are considered as a member of a culture when they have the same radical background, geography and system of values. The existence of culture helps people have their identity and uniqueness (Cinnirella, 1997). Hofstede (1997) addressed that there are two layers of culture: organizational culture and national culture. While national culture people share their value, people present their cultural differences in practice in the organizational culture and in this study the organizational culture would be the main theme.

Communication is considered a way to transmit and share cultures in the workplace as well as in the casual life. According to Pearson et al. (2006), communication is a dynamic, functional and transactional process where two or more individuals come together to share meaning and

understanding in both verbal and non-verbal way. Every culture has its own distinctive communication style and even people in the same culture do not share the same communication style (Du Plooy-Cilliers & Louw, 2003) and people in various cultures will have different understandings of the same message. Samovar, Porter & Stefani (1998) believes that "intercultural communication is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event". When globalization become a common thing and intercultural workplace is essential for the success of companies when they bring their businesses out of their countries, people pay more attention to intercultural communication and how to adapt in the global working environment. It is vital that a sound intercultural communication can be utilized in the vein of the company.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

When people working in intercultural workplace, there are many factors that affect the way people from different cultures communicate with success, some of them can be named relationships, communication climates and time. A positive working environment can be created if people establish good relationship with their colleagues and if communication climate is helpful, relationships can be improved among members (Goldhaber, 1974). In addition, time is also another important factor influencing the success of intercultural communication because understanding the way each culture reflect and perceive time can help define how communication among cultures is evolved (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 1998). Therefore, we can deal with intercultural communication more effectively if we understand relationships, communication climates and time.

RELATIONSHIPS

If positive relationship is developed and maintained, each member can be encouraged to express their needs and feel free to talk with each other (Hamilton & Parker, 1997). For that reason, relationship is very important in intercultural communication. On the other hand, distrust and then distorted communication will be resulted in when members remain poor relationships (Motley & Osborn, 1999). As a result, relationship can affect the success of intercultural communication in the workplace.

Since people coming from collectivistic culture values harmony, interference and cooperation within groups (Dwairy, 1998), relationships play an important role in their working communication, they tend to prevent themselves from create any controversy and disagreement with their colleagues and try their best to maintain relationships as much as possible. To them, staying collaborating with people in their groups helps "protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In contrast, people in

individualistic culture emphasize individual goal, achievement, uniqueness and freedom and people have to take care of themselves (Conaway, Easton, Schmidt & Wardrope, 2007). Therefore, the bond between people in this culture is loose compared to collectivistic. This leads to individualistic member tend to practice confrontation if needed. Hofstede (2001) believed that collectivism and individualism are two polar points on a single continuum, which means if a country has a high score of collectivism then it would have a low score of individualism.

However, Ralston et al. (1999) and Triandis (2004) debated that they are two distinctive constructs and two different points on a continuum developing in different paths. They stated that as the economy is enhanced, the value of individualism goes up as well. That statement agrees with the chart of Hofstede data between Japanese and Vietnamese cultures that although both countries are collectivism and does not have a high score of individualism, which defines that they both values relationship and the cohesiveness in their groups, Japanese employees appear to be more individualistic since their economic situation is more developed than Vietnam. Alberts et al. (2010) also agreed that Japanese especially young generation shows a strong preference for individualism, which shows that their relationships are looser and they are open to disagreement and confrontation.

Hypothesis 1.1 a: Japanese is more individualistic than Vietnamese.

The collectivistic character of Vietnamese cultured was influenced by 10 centuries of Chinese dominant and was shaped by Confucianism (Le, 2005). According to Tran (1996), Vietnamese employees will build up a non-harmonic sense when they face discontent at work. Therefore, developing a right relationship is very important in Vietnamese culture when people from other cultures want to develop business within these cultures.

Hypothesis 1.1 b: Developing right relationships is very important in Vietnamese culture.

COMMUNICATION CLIMATES

Communication climates are also another factor for the success of intercultural communication because it affects communication behaviors, communication style and relationships (Adler, Rosenfeld & Towne, 1995). Communication climate is like the same air that people breath. It is shared by everyone and even when we do not know about it, how good or bad it is will affect people in it. How communication climates affect the working environment comes from how people feel about people and the atmosphere around their workplace. Nonetheless, communication climate of a workplace is not always good or bad; it can be both good and bad or interchange from time to time (Neher, 1997).

Japan has a very high score in Uncertainty Avoidance so they tend to avoid risk and uncertain things so they are unable to be open and honest, therefore, they cannot show their opinions with other member. According to Asante & Gudykunst (1989), high uncertainty avoidance produces much anxiety, which can easily lead to stress and tension. Besides, Masculinity score of Japan is also very high, which states that Japanese employees focus on assertiveness and acquisition of things than others' feelings so they are more competitive aggressive (Hofstede, 2001). In fact, Gudykunst, Nishida & Ting-Toomey (1996) agreed that Japanese employees do not show their real emotions because they believe that it is rude to open themselves in public.

Hypothesis 1.2 a: Japanese employees do not show their real emotions because they believe that it is rude to open themselves in public.

Dissimilarly, Vietnam has a quite low score of Uncertainty Avoidance so they do not feel threatened by ambiguity and tolerate how people behave so they express freely their ideas. Contrary to Japanese employees, Vietnamese employees have less anxiety and stress. In addition, Vietnam scores a low to moderate value of Masculinity so their concentration is on interpersonal relationships and concern for the weak (Jandt, 2010). They prefer to comprise so that everyone can have a consensus and feel comfortable. Danang Foreign Affairs Department (2014) stated that Vietnamese people think that it is their responsibility to learn about other people's feelings and their circumstances.

Hypothesis 1.2 b: Vietnamese people think that it is their responsibility to learn about other people's feelings and their circumstances.

TIME

Another way to understand intercultural communication among people coming from different cultural and regional backgrounds is to be aware of their different orientations towards time (Trompenaars, 1993). Time is considered as another kind of language of the country, it is important for people to learn about the definition of time by the culture they want to work with, which can make a difference between the success and failure in communication in a company (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 1998).

In this research, the theory of Monochronic Time (M-Time) and Polychronic Time (P-Time) will be used to discuss the use of time from different cultures. Hall (1987) defined M-Time as "paying attention to and doing only one thing at a time", time is tangible as money which can be saved, spent and wasted and people are committed to punctuality and timeline. Hall also believed that M-Time is accustomed to short-time relationships which are a dimension from Hofstede in which people focus on finish things right on timeline without considering relationships. On the other hand, people in P-Time cultures are capable of doing many things at

once (Hall, 1987) and punctuality is reversely unimportant. Relationships and spending time with others people is more valuable for future business. This strong tendency to build lifetime relationships contribute to the statement that P-Time is related to long-term dimension of Hofstede.

As a collectivistic and long-term oriented country, in interpersonal relationship Japanese employees are very polychronic and get involved more with people than schedules. However, Hall (1987) said that when dealing business with foreigners and in their use of technology, they highly value punctuality and keeping projects on schedule. In other words, it can be stated that Japanese employees have a combination of M-Time and P-Time.

Hypothesis 1.3 a: Japanese employees have a combination of M-Time and P-Time

There are many studies confirming that Vietnam is a true Polychronic country. Poitvin, Stedman & Davis (2005) a popular notion of Vietnam timing is "rubber time" which means everything takes more time that what Vietnamese people committed. This is due to the fact that Vietnamese employees stress the importance of relationships than deadlines and are willing to extend the deadline if there is a need to preserve relationships. As shown in the Hofstede chart, both countries have high score in long-term orientation but this statement seems more true in interpersonal relationship than in the workplace especially for Japan.

Hypothesis 1.3 b: Vietnam is a true Polychronic country

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Since birth, we have been similar with people from the same cultures and feel comfortable to communicate with them. However, when we step out of our regional as well as comfort zone to meet people from other cultures, some dissimilarities might cause obstacles which will interfere the team in a company to achieve their goal. This part is going to address some of the barriers that cause difficulties in the intercultural communication between Japanese and Vietnamese employees in Japan. The two issues will be discussed would be communication style (Flatley, Lesikar & Pettit, 1999) and attitudes (Beamer & Varner, 1995).

COMUNICATION STYLE

Communication style is an important barrier in intercultural communication because it does not only affect the intention of the send but also the ability to encode of the receiver about a message (Johnson, Mott & Quible, 1996). The inconsistencies the frequency of the use of directness as well as verbal and nonverbal communication might cause discomfort for people from both cultures. This issue is supported by Hall's context theory as presented in the Theoretical Framework part.

As Hall (1976) stated, both Japan and Vietnam fall into the high-context countries category but the intention and how indirect they are is slightly different. As a homogeneous country, Japanese people tend to use indirect and vague communication (Kitao & Kitao 1989, McClure, 2000) as well as nonverbal language because they believe that people can guess each other's feelings from the movement of eyes, facial expressions and the slightest gestures (Matsumoto, 1984). The discomforts caused by communicating with foreigner results Japanese people in rarely smile (Nakane, 1974) and maintain the same posture during conversation or meeting. Therefore, their minor smile or eye contact can means different feelings. However, Japanese people are more direct in some complaining and conflict situations (Spees, 1994) because they want to resolve problems soon so their work can process smoothly.

Hypothesis 2.1 a: Japanese people tend to use indirect and vague communication with nonverbal language daily but more direct in some complaining and conflict situations

In Vietnamese culture, people value delicacy and harmony so they usually do not communicate directly or speak out their mind and they also have the habit to think twice before they speak. Instead, they smile to keep the peace since smile is an important part of Vietnamese people and they can smile in the least expected situations (Poitvin, Stedman & Davis, 2005). When Vietnamese employees have some complaints, they avoid talking face-to-face but make written complaints to manager (HR Solutions Vietnam, 2010). It is hard to learn Vietnamese's facial language because since they were a child they have been taught to avoid eye contact especially with older people or those with higher status (Hunt, 2002).

Hypothesis 2.1 b: if Vietnamese employees have some complaints, they avoid talking face-to-face but make written complaints.

ATTITUDES

Attitude is defined as feeling of one person about a certain person, objects or situation. DuBrin (2002) believed that attitude can influence the way we communicate and interact with other people so it is very important in intercultural communication. We can have both positive and negative attitudes towards people from other cultures based o personal experience and belief and it keeps changing depending on various events with the person or situation (Beamer & Varner, 1995). There are two elements making attitudes of a person about people from other cultures: attitude towards self resulting from concept of self (Heine, Lehman, Markus, and Kitayama, 1999) and attitude towards receiver coming from concept of others (Morris and Peng, 1994).

Attitude towards self is very important because it means the attitude of the source in communication. The level of self-esteem of a person depends on their attitude about

themselves. In others words, if a person have positive towards themselves, they will have high self-esteem but their lesser self-evaluation will cause low self-esteem (Berlo, 1960). In addition, attitude towards others as known as the receiver which also affect the communication because this kind of attitude can influence on how the source sends the message and the receiver gets the message. When the source has a more positive attitude towards a certain person, they would be less critical and open to their new ideas. In contrast, if the attitude is negative, they will get more critical for that person's ideas (Eyre, 1979). On the cultural level, a person holds a national ideology themselves by shaping their country's self-image as well as identifies other countries as other (Kowner, 2003).

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (1994) and Dunung (1995) stated that Japanese people tend to treat people who are non-Japanese as outsiders and be careful to build relationships with them. With the high level of uncertainty avoidance, they reject any different and uncertain behaviors because they expect people to be similar with them. Therefore, it takes a period of time for Japanese people to open themselves and adapt things from different cultures.

Hypothesis 2.2 a: it takes a period of time for Japanese people to open themselves and adapt things from different cultures.

Danang Foreign Affairs Department (2014) believed that although Vietnam is very shy, they love communication and open to new things along with the low score of Uncertainty Avoidance. Michailova and Husted (2003) said that there is still some continuing suspicious of Vietnamese towards foreigners due to the part wars but if foreigners show their honest, sincere and respectful then Vietnamese people will be open more to them (Engholm, 1995).

Hypothesis 2.2 b: Vietnamese people are open to new things and cultures.

INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION

According to Kim (2001), intercultural adaptation is a long process of adjusting to get more comfortable in a new intercultural environment. Beebe, Beebe & Redmond (2011) emphasized the importance of intercultural adaptation to decrease anxiety and stress as well as reduce the distance among people in the communication between cultures. Besides, once we develop the intercultural flexibility it would get easier to adapt communication styles and behaviors to another new culture. Therefore, intercultural adaptation would be a useful tool in a long way for people who work with other cultures. The four techniques that is going to be discussed in this paper includes: improving empathy, encouraging feedback, acquiring social and cultural knowledge and increasing social contact.

IMPROVING EMPATHY

Empathy is trying to imagine oneself in the other's cultural environment in order to understand the other's experience and feelings (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 1998). Empathy is crucial in intercultural communication because empathy can open more chances for people to get to know more deeply about each other. A research by Gudykunst (1993) explained that many interculturally competent communicators were high on empathy. In order to express more empathy, people participating in the intercultural environment should be willing to pay more attention to feelings of people who have different cultural backgrounds from them, enhance their sensitivity for other cultures' values and customs (Verderber & Verderber, 2001). The process might take a lot of effort and time but when the empathy is achieved, members in the intercultural workplace can build and maintain stable relationships with other people.

Although with the slight decrease in collectivism and power distance, Japan is still a country with tradition in seniority (The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, 1994) and unity in groups (Hall, 1987) so people tend to give their priority on their seniors and their group than the feeling of individuals especially people from other cultures. In addition, Japanese is exposed with high score in Uncertainty Avoidance which means they have low tendency to open to uncertain things including foreigners and in Masculinity which implies that they do not usually show their feelings or are concerned about people's feelings more than acquisition. As a result, Japanese employees develop empathy but hardly express in intercultural communication.

Hypothesis 3.1 a: Japanese employees develop empathy but hardly express in intercultural communication.

With two contradictory characteristics community spirit from low individualism and autonomy from high power distance, Vietnamese people allow wide attitude and individual discretion (Tran, 1996) despite strong solidarity and cooperation, which creates them become an autonomous village where opinions of each member is comprehended before reaching an consensus. Besides, being consistent with the low uncertainty avoidance, Poitvin, Stedman & Davis (2005) stated that Vietnamese people are tolerant with people's lack of knowledge about their culture and they will gently guide to the right path. Therefore, it is clear to say that Vietnamese employees develop and show empathy for people's cultural adaptation.

Hypothesis 3.1 b: Vietnamese employees develop and show empathy for people's cultural adaptation.

ENCOURAGING FEEDBACK

Feedback is one of the effective methods to enhance intercultural adaptation competence because when we encourage feedback from others, we can easily understand which behavior

or attitude of ourselves is positive or negative (Devito, 2004). As a result, members of the company would be more enabled to achieve better understanding about each other. In addition, after receiving feedback from other people, the sender can know the message they want to convey can be transferred in their expected ways (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 1998). Then, either we compromise with people who give the feedback to reach the desired communication style or adjust our own communication behaviors to meet the company's needs.

As a high-context country, Japanese people believe that they should not their emotion and feelings freely and it is very inconsiderate of others' feelings so minimum of expressive words and silence have always played an important role in their communication (Gadykunct, Nishida & Ting-Toomey, 1996). As a result, Japanese employees tend not to give their feedback to their foreign colleagues. Instead, they can give hints of their opinions and feedback through their non-verbal language so it is necessary to observe for some clues on their smiles, eye contact or any non-verbal language tools (Porter & Samovar, 1997). However, Jetro (1999) stated that although Japanese employees do not give feedback to people from higher status, in order to improve their company by fixing things that do not go well, they are willing to give feedback to their subordinates. In other words, whether Japanese employees can give feedback depends on the positions between them and the receivers.

Hypothesis 3.2 a: Japanese employees can give feedback depends on the positions between them and the receivers.

Vietnam is also a high-context country so they do not choose the direct way to share their feedback. Vietnamese employees always embrace the principles of maintaining harmony, face saving and conformity (Tuang & Stringer, 2008) so to fitting in the harmony of the society and avoid losing their own and others' faces, they tend to restrain themselves from complaining or giving disagreement that they think may irritates others. Besides the indirectness which "indicates respect for another person's perceptivity and intelligence" (Chambers, 1997), Vietnamese people still have a low score of Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity so they are concerned about people's lack and weakness and want to give feedback but most of them will be given in private (Smith & Pham, 1996).

Hypothesis 3.2 b: Vietnamese employees want to give feedback but most of them will be given in private.

ACQUIRING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE
In the intercultural communication, a person cannot expect other people to adjust to their own communication style and behaviors to fit others' but instead they can improve their knowledge about other cultures, which is more likely to reduce the challenges of intercultural

communication (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2011). Acquiring social and cultural knowledge is important in the process of intercultural adaptation because not merely the knowledge is accomplished but the person will develop more understanding about a culture's values and behaviors as well as how and why they implement each action. When we learn about a culture, we also realize how to interact and get along with other people (Burton & Dimbleby, 1992). By knowing what to do and not to do in an intercultural communication based on solid knowledge about those cultures, interpersonal relationships can be easily developed and maintained. Thomas, et al. (2008) believed social and cultural knowledge is best learned from social interactions which involve paying attention and appreciate the differences among cultures.

Mente (1981) believed that socializing after work is an essential part of Japanese people's business life to learn more about each other and strengthen their relationships. However, because they are a collectivistic country, they tend to socialize with people with their cultural groups rather than foreigners so although there are many chances for foreigners to learn about Japanese culture, it would take some effort and time to get in their circle in the first place.

Hypothesis 3.3 a: socializing after work is an essential part of Japanese people's but only in their cultural groups and hardly with foreigners.

Vietnamese people perceive people with more knowledge will get a higher status in their society despite the vanishing existence of social ranking (Hoang & Dung, 2009) so Vietnamese people always believe that they should have a solid knowledge about things they do and then they can get promoted in the higher level. Besides, Vietnamese love to communicate so they can make effort to learn about new things but only when they are in their community group and once they get out of that group, they get very timid (HR Solutions Vietnam, 2010). In other words, both Japanese and Vietnamese employees have different willingness to learn social and cultural knowledge depending on which kind of group they are in.

Hypothesis 3.3 b: Vietnamese employees can make effort to learn about new things but only when they are in their community group and once they get out of that group, they get very timid.

INCREASING CONTACT

Dealing in the business is not only about making the deal done and members of the company often need to socialize to get to know each other especially when they are from different cultures (Dodd, 1998). Increasing contact creates more interactive environment for members to understand each other's feelings and actions as well as custom and tradition from their cultures (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 1998). Healthy trees grow on good soil. When people have more time to meet and learn, the process of cultural adaptation is enhanced. However, socializing is not an easy thing as people who start to enter the intercultural business thought it would be.

Many people get the anxiety to get into more contact with their co-workers since stress emerged in the communication and they are afraid they can cause more conflicts if they say something wrong or offending to the other's culture (Gudykunst, 1994).

Drinking after work is a part of Japanese people's life especially office workers (Mente, 1981). Japanese people believe that when they are drinking, they get less formal and more frank to each other in a comfortable atmosphere, which create a great opportunity to learn about each other and begin the process of intercultural adaptation. As a result, the best way for foreigners to adapt Japanese culture is joining in their drinking session.

Hypothesis 3.4 a: the best way for foreigners to adapt Japanese culture is joining in their drinking session.

Danang Foreign Affairs Department (2014) stated that occasional visit and eat out is good ways to create intimacy between colleagues. Vietnamese people love visiting so either you are close or not to them, when you come to visit they will show their high hospitality. However, one thing to be noted is Vietnamese people like to ask some topics that might seem sensitive in other cultures such as age, marriage and income in order to reduce the tension in the communication (Poitvin, Stedman & Davis, 2005). Once people from other cultures learn to feel comfortable with those questions, it is easier to get more contact with Vietnamese people.

Hypothesis 3.4 b: Vietnamese people show high hospitality when you visit or increase contact but might ask sensitive topics.

METHOD

MATERIALS

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

A personal interview is considered as the secondary method of this study due to its openness to complexity and ambiguity of the topic (Knight, 2002). By answering questions of "how" than "what", the interview will assist to explore more angles of the intercultural communication between Japanese employees and Vietnamese employees (Silverman, 2000).

20 open-ended questions are designer by the research in Japanese for Japanese employees and Vietnamese for Vietnamese employees. The questions in the interview include asking about personal information, their experience with foreigners, relationships, communication climates, time, communication style, attitudes and how they adapt in intercultural communication.

SAMPLE

The population for this study consists of Japanese and Vietnamese employees working in international companies in Japan which includes Vietnamese companies located in Japan and Japanese companies that have investment in Vietnam and import Vietnamese employees aging from 25-50 years old, both male and female located in Tokyo – the capital of Japan where the business get into the global market more than any place else in the country. 10 Japanese employees and 10 Vietnamese employees will be chosen to be the participants in the personal interviews.

Sampling

Snowball sampling: a 'chain reaction' whereby the researcher indentifies a few people who meet the criteria of the particular study and then asks these participants to identify further members of the population (Dornyei, 2002).

Analysis Method

Think about how the interviews are to be analyzed before they are conducted. The method of analysis decided on - or at least considered - will then guide the preparation of the interview guide, the interview process, and the transcription of the interviews. In addition, the analysis may also, to varying degrees, be built into the interview situation itself. In such forms of analysis - interpreting "as you go" - considerable parts of the analysis are "pushed forward" into the interview situation itself. The final analysis then becomes not only easier and more amenable but also rests on more secure ground. Put strongly, the ideal interview is already analyzed by the time the second recorder is turn off. There are social and ethical restraints on how far the analysis of meaning can be undertaken during the interview itself, but this may serve as a methodological ideal for interview research.

So the question is: "How shall I conduct my interviews so that their meaning can be analyzed in a correct and creative way?"

SIX STEPS OF ANALYSIS

1st step: when subjects describe their life world during the interview. They spontaneously tell what they experience, feel, and do in relation to a topic. There is a little interpretation or explanation from either the interviewees or the interviewer.

2nd step: the subjects themselves discover new relationships during the interview and see new meanings in what they experience and do on the basis of their spontaneous descriptions, free of interpretation by the interviewer.

3rd step: the interviewer, during the interview, condenses and interprets the meaning of what the interviewee describes and "sends" the meaning back. The interviewee then has the opportunity to reply; for example, "I did not mean that" or "That was precisely what I was trying to say" or "No, that was not quite what I felt. It was more like..." This process ideally continues until there is only one possible interpretation left, or it is established that the subject has multiple m and possibly contradictory, understandings of a theme. This form of interviewing implies an ongoing "on-line interpretation" with the possibility of an "on-the-spot" confirmation or disconfirmation of the interviewer's interpretations. The final product can then be a "self-correcting" interview.

4th step: the recorded interview is analyzed by the interviewer alone or with coreseachers. The interview is usually structured for analysis by transcription and with the aid of computer programs for textual analysis. The analysis proper involves coding the interviews, developing the meanings of the interviews, bringing subjects' own understanding into the light, and providing new perspectives from the researcher. A variety of analytical tools focusing on the meaning and the linguistic form of the texts are available.

5th step: could be a reinterview. When the researcher has analyzed the interview texts, he or she may give the interpretations back to the subjects. In a continuation of a "self-correcting" interview, the subjects then get an opportunity to comment on the interviewer's interpretations as well as to elaborate on their own original statements, as a form of "member validation".

6th step: a possible sixth step would be to extend the continuum of description and interpretation to include action, by subjects beginning to act on new insights they have gained during their interview. In such cases the research interview may approach the form of a therapeutic interview. The changes can also be brought about by collective actions in a larger social setting such as action research, where researcher and subjects together act on the basis of the knowledge they have produced in the interviews.

Coding

The most common form of computer analysis today is coding, or categorization, of the interview statements. When coding, the researcher first reads through the transcripts and codes the relevant passages. Then, with the aid of code-and-retrieve programs, the coded passages can be retrieved and inspected again, with options of recoding and of combining codes.

Research Management

When I implement international comparative research, I need to meet international standards in the management of international projects.

Declare any conflict of interest that may arise in the research funding and design, or in the scientific evaluation of proposals or peer review of work by other researchers.

Critically question authorities and assumptions about the research design to avoid predetermining the research outcome and excluding unwanted findings.

Ensure the use of appropriate methodologies and the availability of appropriate skills and qualifications in the research team.

Acknowledge fully previous and concurrent research (data, concepts and methodology), including research that challenges findings.

Ensure factual accuracy and avoid fabrication, suppression or misinterpretation of data.

Ensure that research findings are reported truthfully, accurately, clearly, comprehensively and without distortion.

Demonstrate an awareness of the limitations of the research, including the ways in which the characteristics or values of the researchers may have influenced the research process and outcomes report fully on any methodologies used and any results obtained, including the probability of errors.

Declare the source of funding in any communication about the research.

Comply with national and international laws with particular reference to intellectual property (permissions, attribution of authorship, and acknowledgement of sources) and data protection (collection, processing, security and confidentiality of personal data).

Ensure that results of the research carried out do not harm society but are of benefit to it by improving knowledge and understanding and maximizing utility and relevance.

Avoid social and personal harm, including harassment and discrimination by ensuring that participation is voluntary and based on informed consent, that the views of relevant stakeholders are taken into account, and that results are accessible to them.

Pilot Study

So far I have conducted pilot interviews with 3 Vietnamese employees and will conduct 3 interviews with Japanese employees in Spring Break.

My insight I have got so far is that I should think about hegemony's impact on the relationship between 2 cultures, send questions in advance, consider more issues regarding time and add more information about work-life balance perspectives.

TIMETABLE

Activities	2015									2016												2017
	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Finalizing Research Proposal	■	■	■																			
Finalizing Interview questions				■	■	■	■	■														
Pilot study									■	■	■											
Conducting personal interviews											■	■	■	■	■	■						
Analyzing data																	■	■	■	■	■	
Submitting final report																						■

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